

Testimony of

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Before the

Planning and Development Committee

March 10, 2016

Regarding

- 1. S.B. No. 331 - AAE A HIGH-SPEED INTERNET SERVICE PILOT PROGRAM.**
- 2. H.B. No. 5602 - AAC REGIONALISM.**
- 3. H.B. No. 5603 - AAC REGIONAL TECHNOLOGY.**
- 4. H.B. No. 5604 - AAC REGIONAL EFFICIENCIES.**

Introduction

The Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology, Inc. (“CCAT”), offers this testimony in support of:

S.B. 331 - AN ACT ESTABLISHING A HIGH-SPEED INTERNET SERVICE PILOT PROGRAM

H.B. No. 5602 – AN ACT CONCERNING REGIONALISM

H.B. 5603 - AN ACT CONCERNING REGIONAL TECHNOLOGY

H.B. 5604 - AN ACT CONCERNING REGIONAL EFFICIENCIES

CCAT is a nonprofit corporation that provides services and resources to government, nonprofit organizations, industry, and academia. Specifically, its Information Technology Initiative has been established to improve the economic competitiveness of the region through solutions that lower technology costs and increase long-term technology sustainability. This Initiative provides direct assistance to organizations through technology consulting, providing private cloud services, deploying infrastructure technology, performing managed support of technology infrastructure, and developing and supporting innovative technology applications.

The Proposed Legislation

Regarding S.B. 331

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A HIGH-SPEED INTERNET SERVICE PILOT PROGRAM.

CCAT supports this bill which would provide the establishment of a high-speed Internet service pilot program to enhance the development of a better technology data infrastructure for individuals and businesses in both urban and rural communities in the State. For Connecticut to maintain a technology leadership position and continue to grow individual municipal economies, as well as collectively the state economy, internet access must be both available and competitively priced. This bill provides the encouragement of

strategic partnerships, incorporating the recognition of both business and community need, and allowing the best of market driven action and government sponsored programs to develop essential data services for economic growth. By incorporating the permissive language starting in line 23, the bill recognizes the benefits of public and private partnerships, reinforcing the strengths and cooperative arrangement that can come from such partnership in order to achieve a high level of success for this program. Pricing and performance--two components of affordable access--can be direct beneficiaries of a public private partnerships encouraged through this bill. In addition, the necessity in the proposal to require an applicant to access, at a minimum, matching funds to those of the State, will further strengthen the commitment to create a successful outcome.

CCAT echoes the concerns which have properly noted the critical differences between the capacity and utilization of an affordable access fiber network intended by this bill and the State's current Nutmeg Network. This Network provides the backbone for the state's educational (including libraries) and municipal technology needs. Additionally, it is the foundation for the State's efforts to seek municipal efficiencies. As this Committee is aware, the State has provided significant funding to CCAT to coordinate and develop a CRCOG data center that sits on the Nutmeg Network, which provides private cloud services with enhanced capabilities and security to municipalities at a fraction of the cost of other providers. As such, Nutmeg Network initiatives, including its operations, expansion management or services need to avoid being adversely impacted or "sidelined" as a result of the State's pursuit of this more public and economically driven broadband initiative. It is important to consistently note that the State's Nutmeg Network is not the answer to the issues addressed by this bill.

Regarding H.B. 5602

AN ACT CONCERNING REGIONALISM.

CCAT supports the language and adoption of H.B. 5602. As a nonprofit dedicated to improving the economy, CCAT strongly believes in cooperative efforts towards mutually beneficial outcomes like the group purchasing models augmented by this bill. This proposed legislation promotes regional efforts by enabling greater cooperation in purchasing amongst councils of government, purchasing cooperatives, and regional education service centers (RESCs). Board of Education budgets account for the majority of expenses in municipal budgets, and as such, it is appropriate to increase the potential impacts of regionalization to include education partners as represented by their RESCs. In order to provide consistency with our current regional technology efforts, we would ask that the following language “in cooperation with the Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology” be added to lines forty nine (49) and eighty three (83) of this bill. Through the efforts of the Municipal Opportunities and Regional Efficiencies (MORE) Pilot Program, CCAT has provided the technology knowledge and capacity to the currently five pilot initiatives and believes that the expertise that we have gained in addressing the technology challenges of local governments in the State can add significant value to regional efforts, municipal and educational, going forward.

Regarding H.B. 5603

AN ACT CONCERNING REGIONAL TECHNOLOGY.

CCAT supports the language and adoption of H.B. 5603. As with H.B. 5602, we support the cooperative efforts between municipalities and their representative organizations towards mutually beneficial outcomes. This bill, H.B. 5603, promotes regional efforts by enabling regional technology. In conjunction with the addition of RESCS into cooperative purchasing and regionalism, regional technology approaches will yield

significant benefits beyond even the obvious and primary benefits from cooperative purchasing of technology.

CCAT supports the new language of this bill which speaks to efficiency, collaboration, transparency, access and reduced costs. Through our working with local governments, we have seen the digital divide amongst municipalities—those that have, and those that do not have sufficient current technology. Through regional technology planning, technology purchasing becomes more cooperative, and technology implementation and management become shared. These actions will shrink this divide and citizens throughout the State will benefit from improved government service delivery and outcomes.

CCAT has seen through our current engagement, the enhancement of capabilities and outcomes through leveraging shared technology. While the direct effects of purchasing technology as a group results in direct savings and incremental efficiency in purchasing process, the indirect benefits of shared technology can be exponential in terms of real impact. Core government processes involving multiple department stakeholders, external nonprofit and for profit organizations, and citizens, can be streamlined and enhanced through shared systems and technology. CCAT supports the further efforts of this shared technology that will be enabled by this bill. Further, CCAT supports the greater cooperation and technology sharing--if not already occurring—that is anticipated between towns and their boards of education.

Regarding H.B. 5604

AN ACT CONCERNING REGIONAL EFFICIENCIES.

CCAT supports the language and adoption of H.B. 5604 as it clarifies and enhances existing legislation related to regional efficiencies. The specific additions in this bill address an examination of a comprehensive and broader analysis of impacts, an evaluation of best practices and an assessment of efficiencies achieved by municipalities and local/ regional boards of education. As with H.B. 5603, we support cooperative efforts

between municipalities and their representative organizations towards mutually beneficial outcomes. As such, this bill promotes greater efforts in regional cooperation by requiring a review of more diligent processes.

Conclusion

CCAT appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony on these proposed bills and looks forward to providing any additional assistance or refinement to these legislative proposals that the Committee may request. In summary, CCAT is supportive of the four proposed bills with our referenced additions. We believe that these proposed bills will enhance technology opportunities for citizens through the formation of public private partnerships; to address broadband affordable access; improve opportunities for efficiencies and service delivery through regionalization efforts; encourage greater cooperation between municipalities and boards of education to share investment and the use of technology resources; and provide greater diligence in pursuing and executing regional initiatives.

Respectfully submitted,

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